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Human rights situation in Palestine and other occupied Arab territories

Note verbale dated 8 May 2015 from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations at Geneva addressed to the secretariat of the Human Rights Council

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations Office and Other International Organizations at Geneva presents its compliments to the secretariat of the Human Rights Council and wishes to inform the President of the Council of a flagrant new violation of the Geneva Conventions and of the United Nations resolutions calling upon Israel, the occupying Power, to put an end to its occupation of the Syrian Golan Heights and to cease its aggressive practices and blatant violations of all international treaties and conventions. In fact, the Israeli occupation forces have seized thousands of dunams of land in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights with a view to their distribution among settlers who will be brought in to take over the seized land and set up agricultural projects. Exploratory drilling for oil has also begun on the seized land.

Under the title of "the Farms Project", the Israeli occupation forces have established 750 new farms, the smallest of which covers an area of 65 dunams. Ninety Israeli families have been brought in this year to settle on those farms and this influx will continue at the rate of 150 families per year until all 750 farms are occupied. As part of this operation, Israel has illegally diverted water to irrigate those farms, thereby depleting the water resources of the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and depriving Syrian citizens of their use. At the same time, the Israeli company Afek has begun exploratory drilling for oil in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights near what is known as the Natur settlement. It has almost completed a first exploratory drilling on one site and drilling on a second site is due to begin this month.

These Israeli actions constitute a flagrant violation of international law, of the Geneva Conventions and of Security Council resolution 497 (1981) which considers the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights as null and void and without international legal effect. The resolution further states that all the provisions of the Geneva Convention of 1949 continue to apply to the Syrian territory occupied by Israel since June 1967.

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Those actions also constitute a violation of United Nations resolutions, including resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Human Rights Council which all underscore the illegitimate and unlawful nature of Israeli settlement and other activities in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights and call upon Israel, the occupying Power, to maintain unchanged the physical character, demographic composition, institutional structure and legal status of the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, and to conserve the water and other natural resources which belong by right to the Syrian citizens living under the occupation. Moreover, those actions contravene other United Nations resolutions, the most recent of which are Human Rights Council resolutions 28/24 and 28/26, and General Assembly resolution 69/241 entitled "Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources". In that resolution, the General Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and of the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, including land, water and energy resources, and called upon Israel, the occupying Power, to cease the exploitation, damage, cause of loss or depletion and endangerment of those resources.

As Syria has previously stated, the Israeli settlement campaign is accompanied by ongoing Israeli human rights violations in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights. On 25 February 2015, the Israeli occupation forces re-arrested the Syrian citizen Sidqi al-Maqt while, on 2 March 2015, they also arrested Sheikh Atef Darwish from the occupied village of Buq'ata and Fida'a Majed Al-Sha'aer from the occupied village of Majdal Shams. These illegal practices must be added to Israel's long and shameful record of intimidation, terrorism, forced displacement, the destruction of Syrian villages, the plundering of natural resources and the defacement of historical and natural environmental features.

The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic calls upon the Human Rights Council to take immediate steps to oblige Israel, the occupying Power, to cease its illegal acts of aggression in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, and it reaffirms that the stability of the Middle Eastern region and the credibility of the United Nations depend upon the United Nations taking measures to ensure the implementation of the relevant international resolutions, especially Security Council resolution 497 (1981), by requiring that the Israeli occupation forces cease their aggressive practices and withdrawal from the entire occupied Syrian Golan Heights to the line of 4 June 1967.

The Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic requests the secretariat of the Human Rights Council to kindly circulate the present note verbale in the official languages of the United Nations as a document of the Human Rights Council under agenda item 7 of the Council's twenty-ninth session.